

FEBRUARY 13, 1976

CARIBBEAN INDEPENDENCE: PART II  
(ST. LUCIA)

INTRO:

VOA CORRESPONDENT RUSSELL SPLANE IN THIS (THE SECOND OF TWO) REPORT(S) ON THE CARIBBEAN, DISCUSSES THE DRIVE FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THE BRITISH COLONY OF ST. LUCIA.

NARR:

PREMIER JOHN COMPTON, WHOSE UNITED WORKERS PARTY TOOK OVER THE ST. LUCIA GOVERNMENT AFTER ITS ELECTION VICTORY IN 1974, DID NOT REALLY WANT TO LEAD HIS ISLAND NATION TO INDEPENDENCE WHEN HE ASSUMED OFFICE. HE THINKS THE BRITISH ASSOCIATED STATES IN THE CARIBBEAN SHOULD BAND TOGETHER IN A POLITICAL UNION AND SEEK INDEPENDENCE AS AN INTEGRATED BODY. BUT SINCE TWO OTHER OF THE ASSOCIATED STATES -- ST. KITTS-NEVIS AND ANTIGUA -- RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THEY'LL SEEK INDEPENDENCE THIS YEAR -- AND SINCE GRENADA TOOK THE SAME STEP TWO YEARS AGO -- MINISTER COMPTON SAYS HE HAS NO OTHER CHOICE. HE MUST EITHER JOIN THE MOVEMENT OR BE LEFT, SO TO SPEAK, AS THE "ODD MAN OUT." HAVING MADE THIS CHOICE, MISTER COMPTON EXPLAINS WHAT INDEPENDENCE WILL MEAN TO THE PEOPLE OF ST. LUCIA:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- COMPTON

"WE WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE OUR OWN CHOICES. WE WOULD BE ABLE TO EXERCISE OUR OWN OPTIONS WITHOUT ANY CONSTRAINTS. NOW WE ARE INDEPENDENT IN EVERYTHING EXCEPT IN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE. AS FAR AS EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ARE CONCERNED IT IS HOW YOU TAILOR YOUR SUIT. AS FOR DEFENSE IN THESE DAYS OF THE NUCLEAR ARSENAL, I DON'T THINK ANYONE CAN DEFENDE

THEMSELVES. SO, CONSEQUENTLY, THE OPTIONS NOW ARE REALLY TO WIDEN YOUR CHOICES AND TO BE ABLE TO MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS WITHOUT ANY CONSTRAINTS, WITHOUT ANYBODY LOOKING OVER YOUR SHOULDERS."

NARR:

THE BIGGEST FIGHT THAT PREMIER COMPTON FACES IS OVER THE METHOD HE HAS CHOSEN TO SEEK THE GOAL OF INDEPENDENCE -- A PATH THAT DOES NOT INCLUDE PUTTING THE QUESTION TO THE PEOPLE OF THE ISLAND IN A REFERENDUM:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- COMPTON

"THE CONSTITUTION GIVES YOU TWO OPTIONS. ONE IS YOU ASK THE BRITISH TO REMOVE THE TIES AND THE OTHER ONE IS THAT YOU HAVE A REFERENDUM. THE REFERENDUM IS FOR TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN FAVOR AND THERE IS A VERY REMOTE POSSIBILITY THAT YOU GET TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN FAVOR. SO NOW, THE LEADERS HAVE GOT TO LEAD, AND WE ARE LEADING THE PEOPLE INTO INDEPENDENCE."

NARR:

NOW THAT HE'S DECIDED TO PROCEED WITHOUT REFERENDUM, HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE BY THE OTHER ROUTE:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- COMPTON

"IT'S OUR OWN TIMETABLE -- WE CAN GET IT AS FAST OR AS SLOWLY AS WE WANT. THERE ARE A LOT OF PREPARATIONS TO BE MADE. WE WILL TAKE IT OR SOMETHING TO FIT IN WITH OUR OWN TIMETABLE. WE THINK IT WILL TAKE ABOUT A YEAR."

NARR:

THE OPPOSITION ST. LUCIA LABOR PARTY CHALLENGES THE LEGALITY OF WHAT THEY CALL MISTER COMPTON'S "BACK DOOR" APPROACH TO INDEPENDENCE -- GETTING THE BRITISH TO MAKE THE MOVE INSTEAD OF PUTTING THE QUESTION TO THE PEOPLE IN A REFERENDUM. A LABOR MEMBER OF THE ISLAND'S HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY -- PETER JOSIE -- GIVES THE PARTY'S VIEW:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- JOSIE

"PERSONALLY -- AND I AM SURE THIS IS THE VIEW OF THE PARTY -- WE DON'T BELIEVE THIS IS THE WAY IT SHOULD BE DONE. BECAUSE UNDER SECTION 10-11 OF THE WEST INDIES ACT IN FACT BRITAIN HAS TO USE THE INITIATIVE. BUT WHEN THE PREMIER OF ST. LUCIA IS ASKING ENGLAND TO USE AN INITIATIVE WHICH IS RESERVED FOR ENGLAND, IT SEEMS TO USE THAT THE INITIATIVE UNDER 10-11 IS COMING FROM ST. LUCIA RATHER THAN FROM BRITAIN ORIGINALLY. WHETHER IT WILL BE ACHIEVED THIS YEAR, I DO NOT KNOW, BECAUSE THE LABOR PARTY INTENDS TO FIGHT ALL THE WAY TO SEE THAT THE CONSTITUTION IS FOLLOWED. ONCE THAT IS DONE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION IT CAN BE DONE THIS YEAR OR NEXT MONTH FOR THAT MATTER."

NARR:

HOW WILL THE LABOR PARTY CARRY OUT ITS FIGHT FOR CONSTITUTIONALITY?

MISTER JOSIE DECLINES TO SPELL OUT HIS PARTY'S STRATEGY. BUT A LABOR PARTY FOLLOWER IN CASTRIES -- THE ISLAND'S CAPITAL -- THINKS HE KNOWS. HE'S HILFORD DETERVILLE, HEAD OF THE POWERFUL CASTRIES DOCKWORKERS' UNION, WHO SAYS THE LABOR PARTY'S STRATEGY IS TO BRING DOWN THE COMPTON GOVERNMENT AND FORCE A NEW ELECTION THAT WOULD LET THE VOTERS PASS JUDGMENT ON THE INDEPENDENCE QUESTION:

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- DETERVILLE

"I THINK THE OPPOSITION IS DETERMINED TO FORCE AN ELECTION ON THE ISSUE, AND MY OWN VIEW IS THAT THEY WILL STOP AT NOTHING. I THINK THERE IS A LEGITIMATE RIGHT TO DEMAND AN ELECTION -- TO DECIDE WHO WILL LEAD THE COUNTRY INTO INDEPENDENCE. AND WHATEVER REASONS THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO ADVANCE IN ORDER NOT TO HAVE THE ELECTIONS, THEY WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE OPPOSITION AND THE OPPOSITION WILL BE ENTITLED TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTION IT THINKS NECESSARY IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES."

NARR:

SOME ACTION ALREADY MAY HAVE BEGUN IN ST. LUCIA. WHILE THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO LINK THE INCIDENTS TO THE LABOR PARTY, THERE HAVE BEEN THREE FIREBOMB ATTACKS THIS YEAR AGAINST THE HOMES OF ST. LUCIA CABINET MEMBERS. NO ONE WAS INJURED IN THE ATTACKS AND DAMAGE WAS NEGLIGIBLE, BUT POLICE HAVE BEEN ALERTED TO CRACK DOWN ON WHAT IS OFFICIALLY DESCRIBED AS A "FRINGE ELEMENT" OF THE OPPOSITION. MANY ST. LUCIANS FIND THEMSELVES AGREEING WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF THE DOCKWORKERS'

HILFORD DETERVILLE:

TAPE: CUT SIX -- DETERVILLE

"MY CONCERN IS NOT SO MUCH WITH WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE -- BUT WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN BETWEEN NOW AND INDEPENDENCE."

NARR:

THIS HAS BEEN A REPORT BY VOA'S RUSSELL SPLANE ON THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN THE BRITISH ASSOCIATED STATE OF ST. LUCIA IN THE WINDWARD ISLANDS OF THE CARIBBEAN.

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